

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 AID-20 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

IO-14 JUSE-00 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SNM-02 SY-10 TRSE-00

USIA-15 NSC-10 SCI-06 OMB-01 IGA-02 H-03 DRC-01 /130 W

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P R 010810Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7885

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR, LA

SUBJECT: CRITICISM OF U.S. NARCOTICS EFFORTS IN LAOS

REF: A) STATE 39533

B) VIENTIANE 8455

1. IN VIEW OF CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN WIEDRICH'S ALLEGATIONS ABOUT THE U.S. NARCOTICS PROGRAM IN LAOS, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION MAY BE HELPFUL TO DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS BRIEFING CONGRESSMEN AND THEIR STAFF MEMBERS:
A) SINCE VIENTIANE HAS AN APO, IT IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY WEIDRICH CONSISTENTLY ALLEGES THAT OFFICIAL AMERICANS HERE MUST SMUGGLE OR "SPIRIT" THEIR LETTERS OUT OF LAOS. NO ONE OPENS PERSONAL LETTERS LEAVING THE AMERICAN MISSION IN ANY CHANNEL, AND WE CONSIDER THIS ALLEGATION INSULTING.

B) THE AMBASSADOR IS IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF USAID, THE U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE AND DEA ABOUT THE NARCOTICS PROGRAM. THE DECISION TO STREAMLINE NARCOTICS ACTIVITIES WAS APPROVED BY ALL CONCERNED, INCLUDING CAD. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION WAS HELD IN ABEYANCE AT DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST UNTIL THE AMBASSADOR COULD DISCUSS THE MATTER DIRECTLY WITH MR. JACK O'LOUGHLIN, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL DIVISION, U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE.

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MR. WILLIAM LECLAIR, CHIEF OF CAD IN VIENTIANE, WROTE A MEMORANDUM TO THE AMBASSADOR REBUTTING THE WEIDRICH ALLEGATION THAT THE CUSTOMS PROGRAM WAS "ARBITRARILY" CUT FROM SEVEN TO FOUR. THIS MEMO STATES THAT "AS YOU ARE AWARE, IN MY MEETINGS WITH YOU AND IN OUR MEETINGS WITH MESSRS. O'LOUGHLIN AND BANOWITH, OF THE CUSTOMS SERVICE IN WASHINGTON, THE REDUCTION IN FORCE WAS AGREED TO BY ALL CONCERNED." HE CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT "YOU CAN BE ASSURED THAT MR. O'LOUGHLIN AND U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE WERE HAPPY WITH THE ACCORD REACHED IN THE NUMBER OF U.S. CUSTOMS PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO LAOS."

C) THIS MISSION IS NOT DE-EMPHASIZING THE NARCOTICS PROGRAM, BUT WE BELIEVE THE MINOR LAO PART IN THE WORLD NARCOTICS PROBLEM MEANS WE SHOULD STREAMLINE THE PROGRAM AND RENDER IT MORE EFFICIENT IN KEEPING WITH GOOD MANAGEMENT PRACTICES. THIS STREAMLINING PROCESS HAS INCLUDED INCREASING OUR EMPHASIS ON SUCH NON-ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS

AS CROP SUBSTITUTION EFFORTS IN THE POPPY-GROWING AREAS AND HAS ALSO LED TO INCREASING THE DEA CONTINGENT IN LAOS FROM TWO TO THREE.

D) WEIDRICH'S ALLEGATION THAT THIS MISSION IS "DOWN-GRADING THE NARCOTICS WAR SO AS TO BRUISE FEELINGS OF HIGHLY-PLACED LAOTIAN POLITICIANS..." IS FALSE. IN THE PAST YEAR, RLG ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS HAVE, WITH OUR FULL SUPPORT, INVESTIGATED MILITARY OFFICERS, POLICE OFFICERS AND POLITICIANS--AS WELL AS FOREIGNERS, INCLUDING DIPLOMATS. THERE HAS BEEN NO PRESSURE EXERTED ON US BY ANY RLG OFFICIAL TO REDUCE THE INTENSITY OR EXTENSIVENESS OF OUR PART IN THE NARCOTICS CONTROL PROGRAM IN LAOS. OUR PROBLEM IS RATHER TO ENSURE THAT THIS PROGRAM CAN SURVIVE THE MORE RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL PREVAIL IN LAOS AFTER FORMATION OF THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT. WHITEHOUSE

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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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